

August 3, 2001

SUPPORT FOR HARBOR  
INVESTMENT PROGRAM ACT

**HON. ROBERT A. BORSKI**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 2, 2001

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing, along with Ms. Dunn and 24 Members of Congress, the "SHIP" Act, or Support for Harbor Investment Program Act, to repeal the harbor maintenance tax and provide an alternative source of funding to maintain our Nation's harbors and waterways.

I am fortunate to serve as a representative of a major East Coast port city, and I am well aware of the importance of continued reliable financing of our Nation's harbors and waterways. Every year, hundreds of billions of dollars of goods enter and are moved through this country by means of our water system offering a cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to other means of transportation.

As our economy increasingly moves toward globalization, we will face a corresponding need for safe, efficient, and modern port facilities and waterways to sustain such growth. Expanded use of larger shipping vessels and increased ship traffic at many of our Nation's ports will require a significant investment in increased channel depth and capacity.

The export provision of the Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT), the system that currently provides financial resources for this maintenance, was deemed unconstitutional in a 1998 Supreme Court decision and the European Union has since challenged the import provision as an unfair trade practice and is considering bringing a complaint to the World Trade Organization regarding the tax.

This is why we are introducing the SHIP Act today—to provide an alternative funding source to maintain our Nation's harbors and waterways. This legislation repeals the HMT and restores the 200-year Federal obligation to adequately fund operation and maintenance of the Nation's harbors with funding from the general revenues of the Treasury.

It is only appropriate to fund the construction and maintenance of our Nation's harbors and waterways through the general revenues in light of the nationwide benefit that comes from a safe and efficient port system. To that same end, GAO reported that \$22 billion in these general revenues are a direct result of our ports and navigation system. It is evident that we must return this responsibility back to the federal government.

The existing Harbor Maintenance Tax puts our maritime industry at a competitively disadvantage. The tax increases the price of goods sold in the U.S. and diverts cargo Canada, which does not have a similar tax. At a time we should be working to attract new commerce to our U.S. ports, and take advantage of our waterways to relieve congestion, we are hindering their ability to remain competitive, attract business and aid in relieving congestion. The time to repeal this unfair and detrimental tax is now!

Mr. Speaker, it is important to provide our ports with safe, efficient, and modern port facilities and waterways. We must work to return

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

this responsibility to the federal government as it was for over 200 years. The SHIP Act collaborates the support of groups as diverse as the American Association of Port Authorities, the American Waterways Operators, the National Grain and Feed Association, and others.

I want to thank the bill's current cosponsors and supporters and urge all Member to support this important piece of legislation.

CURRENT CRISIS IN HOME  
HEALTH CARE SERVICES

**HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 2, 2001

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call to your attention an issue of great concern to me and the constituents throughout my southeastern Massachusetts congressional district—the current crisis in home health care services.

As you are well aware, in 1997 Congress approved the "Balanced Budget" Act (BBA). This legislation sought to slash Medicare benefits by \$115 billion—the largest reduction in Medicare payment rates in the program's 35 year history.

I opposed this "reform" bill because I thought it recklessly threatened the quality and dependability of health care for Medicare recipients. Regrettably, it has fulfilled these fears—resulting in \$240 billion of cuts, \$124 billion more than originally intended.

The BBA has resulted in a 53% drop in federal reimbursements for home health services in Massachusetts—well over \$350 million in lost Medicare revenue. 31 Massachusetts home care agencies have closed—and other on the South Shore and the Cape & Islands have limited services to homebound patients.

It is clear that the "unintended" consequences of BBA has had and continues to have a devastating impact on our health care system. And now Congress is backpedaling, trying to address the immediate consequences of the BBA, while searching for comprehensive approaches to the long-term solvency of the overall Medicare program.

In this light, I would like to share with my colleagues an editorial from the Cape Codder newspaper that followed a month-long series of articles outlining critical steps in addressing the challenges in home health care. And I hope this will serve as a useful source of guidance as we continue these deliberations.

[From the Cape Codder, July 6, 2001]

ASSURING HOME HEALTH CARE

For a month, Jennifer Brockway has been reporting on one of the more frightening prospects facing an increasingly older Cape Cod population: the specter of rising health needs and the drastic decrease in home health care aides.

This gap between supply and demand will threaten thousands of us who want to grow old in as independent a fashion as possible. We want to avoid hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living facilities. That's why so many retirees are moving here in the first place.

Those struggling to right a sinking ship offer a wide array of solutions. But, as

Brockway reported, remedies will require action by both state and federal governments, as well as the health care industry itself.

Our month-long series identified the following steps as crucial:

The long-term community—home health care and nursing and rehabilitation homes—must form a united front.

Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates must be increased to reverse damage caused by the 1997 Balanced Budget Act and compensate for rising health care delivery costs.

Home health aides must be paid a wage allowing economic self-sufficiency. They currently earn about \$10 an hour, \$7 less than what's needed to afford a median-priced home on the Cape.

Family health insurance must be made affordable for all direct-care workers.

Training programs for direct-care workers must be increased and expanded to the home care industry.

An active recruitment program must be instituted to capture the high school students, immigrants, and older adults re-entering the workforce.

Opportunities for career advancement in direct care must be encouraged.

Home health agencies must allow greater involvement of home health aides in agency operations and patient care decisions. Aides should be made to feel like respected stakeholders through acknowledgment of their skills and contributions.

As with most complex issues, there is no magic bullet. Solutions require crossing many jurisdictional and geographic boundaries. It means forming unique alliances.

And unless other problems facing Cape Codders—inadequate housing, childcare and transportation—are addressed simultaneously, the current challenges facing home health care indeed will become a crisis.

IN HONOR OF 17 LEXINGTON AVENUE,  
THE SITE OF THE FIRST  
FREE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION

**HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 2, 2001

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize 17 Lexington Avenue, the site of the Free Academy, the first free publicly funded institution of higher education in the United States. Baruch College now carries on the proud tradition of public education at this location.

The Free Academy was approved by New York's legislature in 1847. Townsend Harris, a strong advocate of publicly funded educational opportunities, advocated a school that would "Open the door to all—let the children of the rich and poor take their seats together and know no distinction save that of industry, good conduct and intellect."

The original building was designed by James Renwick, Jr. who went on to design St. Patrick's Cathedral. Gaslights, warm-air heating and drinking fountains made the building modern and luxurious, yet he managed to keep the final cost \$2000 under budget. In January 1849, the Free Academy held its formal opening, admitting its first class of 149 students.

The exquisite building that originally housed the Free Academy became too small for the

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